

INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY Indochina

DATE DISTR. 2/ April 1951

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MONITORING AND SCRUTINY ACTIVITIES

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SOURCE

A. HO GOVERNMENT MATERIAL

1. Morse Code Transmissions

a. Transmitters: The Vietnam News Agency transmits in English, French, and Vietnamese Morse, in addition to five-letter and five-digit code groups. English and French Morse are generally heard on a frequency (variable) of 11935 kcs. with the call letters VNA. The transmitter is believed to be one used by "Voice of Vietnam" for regular voicecasts. The copy is sent by hand at a speed of from fifteen to eighteen words per minute. Press material is beamed usually for general use and sometimes to recipients designated as BPC33, DHTB, BHOX, ABC and VNX4. Five-letter and five-digit groups are always sent to designated recipients. The transmitter has greatly improved in quality during the past year, though it still displays such odd characteristics as shifting frequency without warning and sometimes using the call letters LCJ.

There is, however, a station identifying itself regularly as LCJ operating on a frequency of 7409 kcs. Its daily press file is transmitted in Vietnamese Morse. As with VNA, its coded traffic is beamed to designated recipients. Keying is by hand, sometimes by an extremely poor operator. A third Morse carrier, announced by VNA as operating on a frequency of 4730 kcs., has not been heard.

b. Material: Viet Minh Morsecasts until about a year ago lacked professional quality. They were poorly edited, crude, and sometimes obscene in their atrocity charges against the French--often immature to the point of childishness. During 1950 the quality of filed copy, particularly English, improved so greatly in journalistic aspects as to overtake and perhaps surpass that of the AFP file out of Saigon. The material is extremely readable except for occasional barbarisms and the Oriental tendency to employ pluperfect tenses instead of the past. An incongruous characteristic is the occasional use of American slang rendered in the inevitable British-style spelling.

c. Monitoring: The French are carrying on extensive monitoring of internal Viet Minh transmissions in Morse code. This material is not available to the U.S. Legation.

2. Voice Broadcasts

a. Transmitters: Transmitters are believed to number five or six and to be of one and two kilowatt power. Two are located in the north, one in the central part of the Hue area and two in the Mekong Delta area in the south. The best equipment is reported to be in the central area. Equipment is primarily Japanese military but there is also a large amount of all types including RCA. It is all highly mobile. The general location of the transmitters can be fixed by triangulation but they cannot be located by the police. There seems to be a different point of view on the part of the French and the Vietnamese toward action to silence the Viet Minh transmitters. The French asked if the United States had any equipment which could be installed in an airplane which would enable them to bomb out the transmitters. The

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OO-F-147

- 2 -

director of the Vietnamese broadcasting activities, on the other hand, said that he knew where the Saigon-Cholon transmitter was located but that it was a "high-level" decision not to take action against it.

Ho Chi Minh's former chief radio technician, who had changed sides about a year ago, said that about eight months ago the Viet Minh had asked him to return and supervise the installation and operation of some new equipment which had been received. He assumed that it was probably Russian from China but said it might have been anything as a good deal of equipment was coming from Bangkok. He refused this offer but did say that during the last six months Viet Minh transmissions had improved considerably--a statement with which the Director of the Vietnamese broadcasting activities agreed.

All Ho transmitters are audible in Saigon, but the two northern ones are less dependably received than the others.

b. Material: The morning programs generally consist of music, political talks, and news. Music is furnished by a single banjo or harmonica. Newscasts from the South Vietnam station are adequate for South Central and South Vietnam, but North Vietnam news customarily lags about twelve hours behind that transmitted by the Vietnam News Agency. News at dictation speed covers domestic developments. For its world news the radio depends heavily upon Peking and Moscow dispatches. Commentaries are well written, often containing well-turned phrases of irony, sarcasm or biting humor which retain their distinctive flavor even after translation into English.

Cochinchinese was the only language intercepted until the middle of 1950, when a Vietnamese "who talks very bad Chinese, worse than the Moscow announcer," came on the air with a program highlighted by Communist China's national anthem. Two male announcers who speak a poor brand of Fukien-accented Mandarin now conduct the voicecasts, which are devoted mainly to Ho Government news and to items about overseas Chinese.

c. French Monitoring Activities: French voice monitoring activities include:

(1) Voice of Vietnam (North Area)--Broadcasting $3\frac{1}{2}$ hours of French and Vietnamese language programs with $\frac{1}{2}$ hours of Mandarin and Cantonese language programs listed in the French operation as not taken.

(2) Voice of South Vietnam (Central area transmitter)--Broadcasting $1\frac{3}{4}$ hours of Vietnamese and French with one $\frac{1}{2}$ hour broadcast in Mandarin listed as not taken.

(3) Voice of Nambo (South)--Broadcasting $2\frac{1}{2}$ hours of Vietnamese and French with one $\frac{1}{2}$ hour broadcast in Cantonese listed as not taken.

(4) Voice of Saigon-Cholon--Adequately covered by French monitoring, texts made available in the Bulletin des Ecoutes.

French monitoring equipment includes RCA and SX-28 receivers and dictaphone wax cylinder recording equipment. From the wax recording a transcription is made in Vietnamese, which is then translated into French.

French translators work a normal work day, that is 0800 to 1200 and 1500 to 1800 with half day Saturday. A technician records the evening shows and no attempt is made to maintain an editorial evening watch for spot news or important developments. The Bulletin des Ecoutes is available at approximately 1230 with news up to 1000 of that day. Monitoring techniques seem to be adequate.

There is a general feeling in Saigon that no translator is really reliable. All are under pressure from the Viet Minh or the French or both. USIS assumes some of its employees are Viet Minh sympathizers. One man in USIS reported that he was offered 5000 piasters per month to report to the French on U.S. activities. It takes a certain amount of courage to work for the United States and more to resist the pressures which make it difficult to live in one's environment.

d. Vietnamese Monitoring Activity: This service consists of a stenographic transcription made from the air and without the aid of a recording. All monitoring is done in Saigon on a recent model Hallicrafter receiver using a 25-meter single wire antenna. The object of the service is to gather information for counter propaganda purposes and for the general information of the Vietnamese Government officials. Transcription includes Phnom Penh.

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OO-F-147

- 3 -

3. Press

In the last four months it has become increasingly difficult for Vietnamese in Saigon to see the Viet Minh press. It has been driven further underground by suppressive measures. Most of the Viet Minh printed matter is leaflets and small pamphlets of a purely propaganda nature and usually undated. The periodic press is irregular in its issue and is difficult to find. Most examples are obtained in raids.

B. BAO DAI GOVERNMENT MATERIAL

1. Radio Broadcasts

a. Transmitters in use:

- (a) Saigon: four (two 1-KW, two 12-KW); equipment dates from 1928.
- (b) Hanoi: one (1-KW) 1945 model communications transmitter rebuilt for broadcast.
- (c) Hue: same as Hanoi.
- (d) Dalat: same as Hanoi.

b. Future Plans: At the present time a Dutch engineer is making a survey for ECA of Vietnamese technical needs. His recommendation will include the following:

One 50-KW transmitter in Saigon and three new 1-KW transmitters in Hanoi, Hue, and Dalat. He has been advised to keep his recommendations down to \$150,000 but he believes ECA will put up approximately \$200,000 to carry out the above plans. He estimates that the time necessary to send the specifications to Paris, secure bids, build and install the transmitter will be about one year.

c. Control: Control over all Vietnamese broadcasting is exercised by the Director General of Information. The transmitters used in regional broadcasting were made available to the regional governors by the central Government, and regional governors are responsible for their operation and policies. Provincial governors are appointees of the central Government.

A weekly meeting is held by responsible persons in the Government Information Service at which the past week's broadcast programs are critically analyzed and the upcoming week's programs are planned. Criticisms of regional stations arising in these meetings are forwarded to provincial governors. The line laid down by the Government Information Service is followed precisely.

d. Programming relationship between Saigon and regional stations: Approximately 20% of all regional broadcast hours are direct relay of Saigon. All political and news broadcast programs originate in Saigon with the Government Information Service and are distributed as written scripts, recordings or direct relay to the regional stations. In order to determine the practical application of the degree of control exercised by the Information Service, the director of broadcast activities was asked whether a highly sensational and important event such as the assassination of the Governor of the Hue area would be reported by the Hue radio without reference to the Government Information Service. The answer was that the provincial authorities would telegraph the news to Saigon where it would be put in form for rebroadcast by regional stations.

Local stations prepare their own programs in cultural fields, art, music, etc.

2. Press

All publications are under strict censorship by the Vietnamese and French and indirectly (through fear of retaliatory action) by the Viet Minh. Outspoken papers are suppressed by the authorities. In general the newspapers do not touch ideas. They are filled with advertisements and run from two to three serialized

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OO-F-147

- 4 -

romances each day. Most all news is on the front page and is straight press service coverage with emphasis on AFP. DAN QUYEN, which is close to the Government, is allowed more freedom to discuss ideas than other papers and has editorialized that the U.S. should drive out both French and Communists.

C. CAMBODIAN AND LAOTIAN MATERIAL

1. Radio Broadcasts

a. Cambodian: The Cambodian Government has a 1-KW transmitter located in Pnom Penh. It is the same type of communication equipment (built in 1945) as in Hanoi, Hue, and Dalat. Upon the installation of the transmitter, the absence of qualified Cambodian technicians made it necessary to employ French technicians. The general tone of the programs is similar to Radio France Asie as a result, informants believe, of the high proportion of French staff members. Studios are better equipped than Vietnamese studios because of French influence.

b. Laotian: The Laotian Government has initiated broadcasts from a 1-KW transmitter located at Vientiane. The technicians for this project have been supplied by the Vietnamese. No further information is available at this time. The station was delayed in completion, originally scheduled for 1 January 1951.

2. Press

a. Cambodian: Strict control is maintained by the Cambodian Government and little in the way of an independent point of view is presented.

b. Laotian: There is no newspaper press in Laos. A four-page mimeographed news sheet is put out by the Government Information Service.

D. FRENCH MATERIAL

1. Radio Broadcasts

Radio France Asie has three 25-KW transmitters, as well as one 1-KW transmitter. By agreement of 8 March with the Vietnamese Government the French radio does not discuss local political problems nor controversial matters existing between the French and the Vietnamese. The Vietnamese say that the French are being technically correct on this agreement but that they find subtle ways of boosting the French point of view. The content of French news broadcasts covers much the same ground as the French press.

2. Press

Two of the four French-language papers in Saigon are anti-United States. One, run by a Vietnamese, is pro-United States. The fourth, reputed to be the organ of the High Commissioner, is on the fence regarding the United States. It covers world news according to AFP.

E. CHINESE PRESS

The Chinese-language press consists of five 4-page newspapers. It is heavily censored, like all other papers. All five are run by Chinese. There is little local news. World news is monitored from press services without contract and no credit is given for articles thus taken from the air. All support the Kuomintang and are as careful as possible not to step on anyone's toes. Some feature story material comes from Central News of China and from Hong Kong papers.

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